

Course number and section: ENGL 345B-101

Course Topic: Studies in Backgrounds to International Literature in English: **AFROPOLITAN LITERATURE AS WORLD LITERATURE**

Credits: 3

Term: 2021 Winter Term 2

Instructor: Sakiru Adebayo

## **AFROPOLITAN LITERATURE AS WORLD LITERATURE**

This course examines the notion of Afropolitanism, a philosophical and aesthetic concept that amplifies Africa's influence and positioning in the (post)modern world. For a long time in the European universe of reason, Africa was (mis)construed as the *heart of darkness*. Also, for a long time, an African classic novel like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* was read as an anthropological – rather than a literary – work by many Western intellectuals. However, with the mass exodus of Africans to the West beginning in the 1970s, there emerged a crop of young, multicultural, multiracial, multilocal and often multilingual Africans who challenge stereotypes and spearhead the move to redefine and complicate – rather than oversimplify – what it means to be African in this age of accelerating globalization. These relatively young Afropolitans – including, for instance, Wangechi Mutu, Trevor Noah, Lupita Nyong'o, Derrick Ashong, Esi Edugyan, Taiye Selasi – help us to better understand the various ways in which Africa is enmeshed into the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students will learn, in the works of Afropolitan writers, how methodological nationalism is transcended in order to present a hybrid world with multidirectional flows of memories and networks of sensibilities. With these novels, we will explore the ideological underpinnings of the concept of Afropolitanism and how that may illuminate our understandings of contemporary African identities. We will also explore how Afropolitan novels contribute to the recalibration of discourses around nationalism, citizenship and the diaspora. In essence, in this course, we will examine how the Afropolitan novel formulates new modes of being African in the world.

### **Reading List**

We will read Teju Cole's *Open City*, NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*, Dinaw mengestu's *Children of the Revolution* and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* as Afropolitan novels that mirror the multi-dimensional (African) mobilities and dispersals in the world.